INTER–AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
56th MEETING

11-12 February 2004
Auditorium
WFP Headquarters, Rome

Common Tools and Services: Background Note

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It has been recommended that the 56th IASC WG meeting consider the topic of Common Inter-Agency Services. There is not, as yet, a commonly accepted definition – or understanding - of what exactly such a service consists of and perceptions among IASC members vary. In order to trigger the discussion, a "core group" of common services (comprising JLC, HIC, UNHAS, CMCoord and ICT) has been proposed for the initial debate at the IASC WG 56th meeting. The discussion on common tools and services originated in the Emergency Response Meeting in April 2001. At this stage, further technical discussions may be considered, by the IASC WG 56th meeting, as the most useful next step forward.

It is suggested that the IASC WG 56th meeting should, in the first instance, consider and agree on the broad outline of issues to be addressed in the context of common services as highlighted below, following a preliminary round of consultations among common services' providers and users. Subsequently, the IASC WG should adopt a framework for that discussion process, define responsibilities and adopt time-frames.

It is recommended that the 56th IASC WG meeting discuss the following:

  1.   **IASC WG to identify issues of concern, e.g.:**

- Affirmation of a broad IASC strategy/commitment to the Common Services (CS) idea. Is the idea of CS the optimal way forward?

- Main CS areas: agreement on what are/should be CS and which ones are to be discussed/evaluated, considering that different CS are at unequal stages of development and utilization at present;

- The need for clear understanding of CS TORs, time-lines and target groups, also as to avoid duplication/gaps;

- The need for the elaboration of common inter-agency procedures and criteria for activation/deployment as well as exit strategies, in a consultative inter-agency process establishing what service can be best provided by whom.

- Inter-operability and interaction between CS. Feasibility/desirability of Common Premises i.e: base camp concept (vide East Timor example);

- Examine the need to ensure overall management and oversight of CS . Lead agency/HC/RC?

- Explore what reporting mechanisms should exist (e.g. IASC/responsible agencies).

- Accountability and measuring the impact: examine the need to establish necessary mechanisms for performance monitoring /evaluation;

- The need to use cost-effectiveness and client satisfaction as a way of measuring quality and impact of services provided;

- Complex emergency vs. natural disaster settings. Examine the need and feasibility of activating selected CS following sudden-onset disasters/emergencies.

2. **IASC WG to endorse the framework for future discussion on Common Services:**

- Organise a technical-level Workshop, to report to the 57th IASC meeting in Geneva in June 2004;

- Agree on the process leading to technical-level Workshop and way forward;

- Recommend that, in the context of further CS discussion, linkages be established with appropriate IASC subsidiary bodies such as Field Information Management, WGET etc.

Proposed Action Points/Decisions by IASC-WG
The IASC WG 56th meeting is expected to review and discuss the above proposal and to endorse the proposed framework as way forward.

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